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Lodge's Return Poses Questions in Saigon

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SAIGON, Aug. 21—When Henry Cabot Lodge arrived here yesterday to begin his second tour as United States Ambassador, he stirred emotions among Vietnamese which varied from awe to affection to fear to respect. Many Vietnamese seem to believe that Mr. Lodge will practically take over the country.

It was apparently this suspicion that brought forth a public flash of temper from Air Vice Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky, Premier of the "military directorate" of generals that functions as South Vietnam's current Government. At a news conference earlier this month, Premier Ky said that the ties between the United States and South Vietnam should not be allowed to become "chains of slavery," a form

of political bondage that would make the alliance pointless for Vietnamese "patriots." The Premier did not mention Mr. Lodge by name, but he was clearly warning the Ambassador not to press too hard for political reforms.

To a small band of Americans in Saigon, Mr. Lodge's appointment represented hope that, on the contrary, some emphasis would shift back to political and psychological work with the population. And some Vietnamese—those who yearn for some kind of popular government and who heed café rumors that Mr. Lodge will insist on restoration of a civilian regime—hoped that the new Ambassador would be no more afraid of steering a collision course with Marshal Ky than he was with former President Ngo Dinh Diem. Some Vietnamese Roman Catholic leaders, on the other hand, were apprehensive because Mr. Lodge showed sympathy for the Buddhists in their 1963 struggle with Mr. Diem.

All this suggests that the reputation which Mr. Lodge enjoys in South Vietnam could be something of a liability as well as an asset. The main issue is not whether he will attempt to make and unmake governments—which he surely will not attempt—but what effect he will have on American influence with the South Vietnamese and the Government in power.

Some U.S. sources say that after Mr. Diem's downfall in November of 1963 each subsequent government became easier to deal with and more responsive to advice—until the present regime. Marshall

Ky could represent a trend in the opposition direction. But no one is sure.

The intriguing speculation about Mr. Lodge's return was heightened considerably when it was learned this week that Edward Lansdale, a retired U.S. Air Force general, would soon join him as a special assistant for pacification. Mr. Lansdale is widely credited with advising and helping the late Presidents Diem and Ramon Mag-saysay of the Philippines during difficult times when he was reported to be an operative of the Central Intelligence Agency.

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Mr. Lansdale is widely admired here for his understanding of the realities of antiguerrilla warfare and of a viable political doctrine which could win Asian allegiance. The decision to bring him back to South Vietnam indicated that Ambassador Lodge is determined to inject fresh thinking into efforts to solve the country's problems.

In the end, observers say, Premier Ky and other Vietnamese officials may come to feel that the main threat to their sovereignty and dignity lies not with Mr. Lodge but with the increasingly massive American military build-up. There are Americans in South Vietnam who say privately that "we are going to have to take more control of this situation." The Vietnamese authorities may find that Mr. Lodge, far from being a menace to them, will support their retention of a reasonably powerful voice in the conduct of the struggle.